(b) if so, how the services of the driver have been appreciated by Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) Yes, Sir. Train No. 629 Villupuram-Mayiladuturai Passenger left Nellikuppam station at 06.18 hrs. of 25.06.2001. While approaching Varakkalpattu, the train driver, on seeing big stones between the track, stopped the train. The stones were removed by the crew and the train was restarted. The train suffered a detention of five minutes at the site.

(b) The driver of the train has been recommended for an award at Zonal Headquarters level.

Introduction of trains in Kerala

2869. SHRI S. RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the criteria/norms for laying rail lines and introducing trains in States;

(b) whether Kerala needs expansion and introduction of trains; and

(c) if so, the steps taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) to (c) Investment planning on the Railways including planning for New Lines, is done in an integrated and need based manner keeping a national perspective in view. Geographical boundaries of a State, *per se*, do not form a criterion for determining Railway investments, especially in a scenario where many Railway projects span across more than one state.

Similarly, decisions regarding introduction of new trains are taken in a need based manner keeping in view the traffic requirement, operational feasibility and availability of resources.

New rail line between Kadur and Chikmagalur

2870. SHRI K. C. KONDAIAH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) when laying of the new rail line between Kadur and Chikmagalur was sanctioned;

(b) if so, the estimated cost of the project;

(c) the amount spent so far on the above rail line;

(d) when the project was to be completed; and

(e) whether Government would take steps to earmark more funds to complete the above project expeditiously?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) The year 1996-97.

(b) Rs. 157 cr. at 1995-96 price level.

(c) Rs. 8.56 cr. upto 31.3.2001.

(d) and (e) No target date has been fixed. The work would be progressed and completed as per availability of resources.

Gauge conversion of Sakaleshpur-Mangalore rail line

2871. SHRI K.C. KONDAIAH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the total amount earmarked for converting the Sakaleshpur Mangalore meter gauge rail line into broad gauge;

(b) the amount spent so far;

(c) whether it has come to the notice of Government that the conversion work has virtually stopped;

(d) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(e) by when the above work would be completed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) Sakaleshpur-Mangalore is a part of sanctioned gauge conversion project of Arsikere-HassanMangalore. Estimated cost of the entire project is Rs. 325.98 crores.

(b) Rs. 140.87 crore upto 31.3.2001.

(c) No, Sir. The work is in progress.

(d) Does not arise.

(e) No target date has yet been fixed. The work would be completed in the coming years depending upon availability of resources.